

## RENAISSANCE ORNAMENT.

engaged his attention. Nicholas Jenson, the Frenchman, who was sent by Louis XI. to the *ateliers* of Fust and Scheffer, to learn "le nouvel art par lequel on faisait des livres," carried his acquired knowledge from Mayence to Venice, where he invented the Italic character, subsequently adopted by the learned Aldus Manutius. This remarkable man, who was a no less learned editor than he was zealous printer, from about the year 1490, gave to the world in rapid succession editions of the Greek and Latin Classics. Among his earliest works is one ever memorable in the history of Art, the "Hypnerotomachia," or dream of Poliphilus, written by the learned ecclesiastic Fra Colonna. It is profusely illustrated with engravings on wood, the design of which has been frequently ascribed to no less great an artist than Andrea Mantegna. Through those illustrations, which display a profound study of ancient ornament, types of form diametrically opposed to those of the middle ages were disseminated over the Continent of Europe. The publication of Vitruvius at Rome, about 1486, at Florence in 1496, and at Venice, with illustrations, in 1511, as well as of Alberti's great work, "De Re Ædificatoria," at Florence, in 1485, set the seal upon the classical tendency of the age in matters of Art, and afforded the means of speedily transmitting to other countries the details of ancient design, so warmly taken up throughout Italy. The successors of the first Aldus at Venice, the Gioliti in the same city, and the Giunti at Florence, rapidly multiplied the standard classics; and thus the art of printing speedily caused a movement of revival to become cosmopolitan, which, had that noble art remained undiscovered, would very probably have been limited, to a great extent, to the soil of Italy.

Long, however, as we have already asserted, before the aspirations of the first labourers in the mine of antiquity had been thus brought to fruition, indications had been given in the world of Art of an almost inherent antagonism on the part of the Italians to Gothic forms. In the ornaments which surround the ceilings of the Church of Assisi, ascribed to Cimabue, the father of painting, the acanthus had been drawn with considerable accuracy; while Nicola Pisano and other masters of the trecento, or thirteenth century, had derived many important elements of design from a study of antique remains. It was scarcely, however, until the beginning of the fifteenth century that the movement can be said to have borne really valuable fruit. In its earliest stage the Renaissance of Art in Italy was unquestionably *a revival of principles*, and it was scarcely until the middle of the fifteenth century that it came to be in anywise *a literal revival*. Conscious as we may be, that in some productions of this earlier stage, when Nature was recurred to for suggestion, and the actual details of classic forms were comparatively unknown and unimitated, there may exist occasional deficiencies, supplied at a later period, and under a more regular system of education; we are yet free to confess a preference for the freshness and *naïveté* with which the pioneers worked, over the more complete but more easily obtained graces of an almost direct reproduction of the antique.

The first great step in advance was taken by the celebrated Jacopo della Quercia, who having been driven from his birth-place, Sienna, to Lucca, executed about the year 1413, in the Cathedral of that city, a monument to Ilaria di Caretto, wife of Giunigi di Caretto, Lord of the City. In this interesting work (of which a good cast may be seen in the Crystal Palace) Jacopo exhibited a careful recourse to nature, both in the surrounding festoons of the upper part of the pedestal and the "puttini," or chubby boys supporting them; the simplicity of his imitation being revealed by the little bandy legs of one of the "puttini." His great work, however, was the fountain in the Piazza del Mercato Siena, which was completed at an expense of two thousand two hundred gold ducats, and even in its present sad state of decay offers unmistakable evidence of his rare ability. After his execution of this *capo d'opera*, he was known as Jacopo della Fonte; this work brought him much distinction, and he was made Warden of the Cathedral in that city, where, after a life of much labour and many vicissitudes, he died in the year 1424, aged sixty-four. Although one of the unsuccessful

## RENAISSANCE ORNAMENT.

candidates for the second bronze door of the Florence Baptistry, as we shall presently see, he was much esteemed during his life, and exercised a great and salutary influence on sculpture after his death. Great, however, as were his merits, he was far surpassed in the correct imitation of nature, and in grace, dexterity, and facility in ornamental combination, by Lorenzo Ghiberti, who was one of his immediate contemporaries.

In the year 1401, Florence, under an essentially democratic form of government, had risen to be one of the most flourishing cities of Europe. In this civic democracy the trades were distinguished as guilds, called "Arti," represented by deputies (*consoli*). The Consuls resolved in the above-mentioned year to raise another gate of bronze to the Baptistry, as a pendant to that of Andrea Pisano, which had been previously executed in a very noble, but still Gothic style.

The *Signoria*, or executive government, made known this resolve to the best artists of Italy, and a public competition was opened. Lorenzo Ghiberti, a native of Florence, at that time very young (twenty-two), ventured on the trial, and with two others, Brunelleschi and Donatello, was pronounced worthy. These two last-named artists appear to have voluntarily retired in his favour; and in twenty-three years from that date the gate was finished, and put up. The beauty of its design and workmanship induced the *Signoria* to order another of him, which was ultimately finished about the year 1444. It would be impossible to overrate the importance of this work, either as regards its historical influence on art or its intrinsic merit,—standing, as it does, unrivalled by any similar specimen in any age for excellence of design and workmanship. The ornament (for a portion of which see Plate LXXV., Fig. 3), which encloses and surrounds the panels, is worthy of the most careful study. Lorenzo Ghiberti belonged to no school, neither can it be said he founded one, he received his education from his father-in-law, a goldsmith; and his influence on Art is to be seen rather in the homage and study his works received from men such as Buonarotti and Raffaelle, than from his formation of any school of pupils. He died in his native city at a good old age, in the year 1455. One of his immediate followers, Donatello, imparted a life and masculine vigour to the art, which, in spite of all their beauty, were often wanting in the compositions of Ghiberti; and the qualities of both these artists were happily united in the person of Luca della Robbia, who, during his long life (which extended from 1400 to 1480), executed an infinity of works, the ornamental details of which were carried out in a style of the freest and most graceful analogy with the antique. In the person of Filippo Brunelleschi the talents of the sculptor and the architect were combined. The former are sufficiently evinced by the excellence of the trial-piece in which he competed with Ghiberti for the execution of the celebrated gates of San Giovanni Battista; and the latter, by his magnificent Cathedral of Sta. Maria delle Fiore at Florence. This combination of architectural and sculptur-esque ability was, indeed, a distinguishing feature of the period. Figures, foliage, and conventional ornaments, were so happily blended with mouldings and other structural forms, as to convey the idea that the whole sprang to life in one perfect form in the mind of the artist by whom the work was executed.

A development of taste coincident with that noticeable in Tuscany took place at Naples, Rome, Milan, and Venice. At Naples, the torch that was lit by Massuccio was handed on by Andrea Ciccone, Bamboccio, Monaco, and Amillo Fiore.

At Rome, the opulence of the princes, and the great works undertaken by the successive pontiffs, attracted to the Imperial city the highest procurable ability; and hence it is, that in the various palaces and churches fragments of exquisite decorative sculpture are still to be met with. Bramante, Baldassare Peruzzi, and Baccio Pintelli (of whose arabesques on the exterior of the Church of Sant' Agostino, one of the earliest buildings of the pure revival executed in the Imperial, our woodcuts give some elegant examples), and even the great Raffaelle himself, did not disdain to design ornaments